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SUBJECT: GEORGIA UPDATE, OCTOBER 19

REF: MOSCOW 11690 AND PREV.

Classified By: AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

#### Summary -----

¶1. (C) News of detention of Georgians continues to appear, with the Volga Federal District the latest site. The Georgian Embassy claims that educational institutions are still being used in some areas to locate undocumented Georgians, though a Moscow official denies this ever happened inside the capital. Officials and private citizens continue to protest the targeting of the ethnic Georgian community in Russia, while the Duma prepares to assess Abkhazia's claims to independence. End Summary.

#### Deportations -----

¶2. (SBU) The body of Tengiz Togonidze, who died of asthma on October 17 while awaiting deportation from Moscow, has left Moscow. Owing to the Russian ban on direct flights to Tbilisi, the body was flown to Yerevan for trans-shipment to Tbilisi, where Togonidze's family lives.

¶3. (U) Press reports confirm Georgian Embassy claims that about 150 Georgians in the Volga Federal District have been detained and served with deportation orders. The Georgian Embassy claims about 100 Georgians remain in detention in Moscow.

¶4. (C) Moscow Duma International Affairs Department Deputy Director Lebedev predicted to us that sanctions would remain in place for "months, not weeks." The Presidential Administration would not set in motion the machinery of state, he argued, only to reverse itself a few days later. When pushed on the fact that some Georgians with visas and work permits were being deported, Lebedev pushed back, saying "it is not pretty and it is not nice, but Russia has a sovereign right to revoke visas." Georgian professionals, he predicted would remain, while criminal elements and casino owners would continue to feel the heat.

¶5. (C) However, Boris Makarenko, consultant to United Russia, noted a contradiction between the campaign to deport Georgians and the new national migration policy coming into effect on January 1 2007, which provides an amnesty and a streamlined means for illegal migrants to obtain legal status. This is "absolutely incompatible" with the measures being brought against the Georgian community.

#### Harassment, Sanctions -----

¶6. (C) The Georgian Embassy claims institutions of higher education in Tomsk have received requests for information on students with Georgian surnames. Moscow official Lebedev adamantly denied that there had been a Moscow City Duma order

permitting the use of school records to identify Georgian families. Such a step was "absolutely unacceptable;" the Mayor rejected any such idea, as did the Ministry of Education and the federal authorities. "It is not happening, it would cross all bounds."

Aims

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¶7. (C) Former Prime Minister Kasyanov, speaking with the Ambassador October 19, was scathing in his analysis of the Georgian President, saying that Saakashvili did not understand what he was doing. "He's going to keep pushing, and then he will get what he deserves." However, Kasyanov condemned the targeting of ethnic Georgians. Moscow official Lebedev, too, reiterated arguments that the GOR campaign was designed to show Georgians the price of retaining Saakashvili and the Georgian President the cost of provoking Russia.

Statements

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¶8. (U) A chorus of Duma deputies has urged Russia to recognize the independence of separatist Abkhazia, including Duma CIS Affairs Committee Chair Kokoshin. Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Kosachev has stated that the Duma will review Abkhazia's claims, but noted that this is for the government, not the Duma, to decide. Lebedev explained that Mayor Luzhkov also takes an active interest in Georgia and the separatist enclaves due to the significant financial flows between the two. If the residents of the enclaves flee, their favorite place of refuge is Moscow, with many enclave residents already having businesses, properties and family members in the capital. The city has investments in

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Abkhaz resorts, funds road repair and undertakes city administration training as part of the economic development program for South Ossetia.

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